

Central Intelligence Agency

190

25X1



Washington, D.C. 20505

DIRECTORATE OF INTELLIGENCE

15 February 1983

SOVIET LEADERSHIP VIEWS OF THE PERSHING THREAT

Summary

Key Soviet Defense Council members probably hold private views of the Pershing II threat that differ, at least in priority, from those presented in the USSR's propaganda campaign against the INF.

The Soviet leadership probably sees the challenge posed by the Pershing II as primarily geopolitical—part of a broader US effort to upset the strategic balance of power and coerce Soviet global behavior. Their statements indicate they consider that:

- The Pershing II is part of a broader US strategic plan to acquire forces to fight a limited nuclear war in the European theater.
- Pershing II is "destabilizing" because it can strike critical strategic targets—particularly the Soviet command and control system—in the western USSR, reducing confidence in Moscow's launch-on-tactical-warning option.
- Pershing II, in conjunction with a coordinated massive US ICBM launch, poses the threat of a sudden disabling first strike against Soviet strategic forces.

The hierarchy of propaganda charges reflects these leadership concerns in reverse order of priority.

25X1

25X1

SOV M 83-10030

This memorandum was prepared by of the Current Support Division, of Strategic Forces Division, and of Policy Analysis Division of the Office of Soviet Analysis. Comments and questions should be addressed to the Chief, Current Support Division, Office of Soviet Analysis on

25X1

25X1

25X1

25X1

Capabilities and Roles

The Soviets have contended in technical journals that the Pershing II is a "totally new system," and not a modernized version of its precursor, the Pershing IA. They allege that the Pershing II has:

- New design and test-launch equipment.
- Enhancements, such as an automated topographical survey and targeting system, and a substantially new warhead outfitted with a terminal guidance system.
- A 2,500 km range, "three times" that of the Pershing IA.
- A flight-time that would reduce Soviet warning of a US ballistic missile attack from "20 to 4 (or 6) minutes."

25X1

We assume that Soviet military analysts know the planned range (1,800 km) and deployment (central West Germany) area and conclude that the 108 missiles could target:

- Forty ICBM launch control facilities for 400 ICBMs--almost 30 percent of the force;
- One over-the-horizon radar oriented toward detecting launches from US ICBM fields and four ballistic missile early warning radars;
- Numerous headquarters, command posts, communications facilities, and bases for Soviet Strategic Aviation, SRF, Navy, and Air Defense Forces, plus several national-level nuclear weapons stockpile sites.

25X1

If the Soviets assume a 2,500 km range for the Pershing II, other facilities could also be targeted, including National Leadership, General Staff, and SRF headquarters and command and control facilities around Moscow, 27 additional ICBM launch control facilities, and numerous other important targets. Many of these installations--particularly those near Moscow--would also be within the 1,800 km range if Pershing IIs were deployed to the northeast near Hamburg, West Germany.

25X1

We believe that the potential vulnerability of their command, control, and warning facilities in the western USSR would reduce the confidence of Soviet military analysts in their launch-on-tactical-warning response to a US ballistic missile attack. This, in turn, would probably diminish their confidence that they would have time to identify the origin of incoming missiles and launch an appropriate response without unnecessarily escalating the conflict to intercontinental warfare. Soviet military analysts probably consider that even if a surprise Pershing attack slowed their response, they would have sufficient redundant and mobile command and control and force survivability to launch a credible retaliatory strike after sustaining a US ICBM attack.

25X1

Assumed US Intentions

Soviet political leaders have consistently emphasized the geopolitical requirements that they believe drive all US strategic planning. They claim that the US strategic "intention" in deploying Pershing IIs and GLCMs in Europe is to pose a "gray area" threat to Soviet intercontinental-range nuclear systems. They allege that these systems are already offset, under the SALT agreement, by similar US-based systems, and that Washington is, thus, attempting to achieve strategic superiority through the "back door." Soviet leaders have said that all postwar US Administrations have viewed US strategic superiority as the key to offsetting Soviet advantages in conventional forces along the USSR's periphery.

25X1

Soviet leaders have reasserted their contention that the current US Administration continues to strive for strategic superiority in order to:

- Escape from the constraints imposed by East-West strategic parity on US foreign policy generally; and specifically,
- Reinvigorate the credibility of the longstanding US threat to use strategic nuclear power so as to "deter" Soviet or proxy adventures in Third World.

25X1

Nevertheless, Soviet leaders reassure domestic audiences that, although the US continues its efforts to regain strategic superiority, the Soviet strategic nuclear deterrent now virtually prevents the US from using its strategic weapons against the USSR. They see Pershing II as increasing the threat to their strategic forces, but Soviet leaders have stated that the US is deterred from attempting a disarming first strike--even with Pershing II--by the Soviets' modern missile detection systems and strategic forces readiness.

25X1

Soviet Propaganda Against INF

The Soviet propaganda effort to prevent Pershing II deployment has followed three general themes over time.

- The propaganda now asserts that Pershing IIs would be "destabilizing"--reducing warning time of such an attack, and forcing the Soviets to further compress and automate warning, decisionmaking, and launching procedures. The Soviets maintain that implicitly this tightening of the trigger finger increases the chances of an accidental nuclear war.
- Recent propaganda strives to make it appear that the Pershing capabilities signal an "intention" to launch a sudden, disabling strategic nuclear strike.
- For the first year or so after the NATO decision to deploy, the Soviets contended that the weapon was part of a broad US strategic plan to acquire the type of forces that would enable it to limit a nuclear war to the European theater.

25X1

The limited war theme, as propagandized by Moscow, has been replaced over the past couple of years by a firm warning that any Pershing II that landed on Soviet soil would be considered to have been launched from the US itself, and that the USSR would not lend credence to the US belief in the possibility of limiting nuclear conflict to a specific geographic region. Current Soviet propaganda is focused on the "disabling first strike" and "destabilization" themes. The "destabilization" argument has been relatively successful--it is more plausible, and its technical details can be confirmed by Western intelligence analyses.

25X1

Conclusions

The Soviets probably consider that the geopolitical threat posed by the Pershing II derives from a combination of its potential military roles. They are particularly concerned that the limited war-fighting potential of the Pershing II might encourage US leaders to believe they could fight a theater nuclear war--involving strikes on Soviet territory--but still limited to Europe.

25X1

Soviet political leaders probably do not believe that a Pershing II attack on their ICBM forces would prevent them from retaliating after absorbing a US first strike. They probably do believe, however, that Pershing II could severely degrade their launch-on-tactical-warning capabilities. Without a viable launch-on-tactical-warning option, the Soviets would fear that they could not effectively guarantee an appropriately tailored retaliatory strike if subjected to a surprise US attack once a war began in Europe.

25X1

The propaganda decries the Pershing II most for its alleged "first disarming strike" role when used in conjunction with a coordinated massive US ICBM launch against Soviet strategic forces. Military planners must prudently consider this possibility, but the leadership almost certainly recognizes this as "worst-case" and the least likely scenario.

25X1

25X1



SOVIET LEADERSHIP VIEWS OF THE PERSHING THREAT

Distribution:

Orig&1 - Undersecretary of Defense for Policy

1 - DDI

1 - [REDACTED] SA/DCI

25X1

1 - Charles A Briggs, ED/DCI

1 - Senior Review Panel

1 - [REDACTED] C/NIC

25X1

1 - Douglas MacEachin, DD/CPAS

1 - Lawrence Gershwin, NIO/SP

1 - Stanley Moskowitz, NIO/USSR-EE

5 - OCPAS/IMD/CB

1 - D/SOVA

1 - DD/SOVA

1 - EO/SOVA

1 - C/PA

1 - C/SE

1 - C/SF

1 - C/TF

1 - C/DI

1 - C/EA

1 - CS/S/[REDACTED]

25X1

1 - PA/S/[REDACTED]

1 - SF/E/[REDACTED]

1 - C/CS

1 - C/CS Typescript File

1 - C/CS/S

1 - C/CS/E

1 - C/CS/C

1 - CS/S Typescript File

External Distribution

1 - Mr. Jeremy Azrael
Office of Director of Political
and Military Affairs
Room 7317 NSB, Department of State

1 - Mr. Thomas G. Behling
SA/SP
Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
Room 4494, Department of State

1 - Mr. Stephen W. Bosworth
Director, Policy Planning Staff
Room 7311 NS, Department of State

1 - Mr. Richard Burt
Assistant Secretary, Bureau of European Affairs
Room 6226 NS, Department of State

1 - Mr. Richard Combs
Office of Soviet Affairs
Bureau of European Affairs
Room 4217 EUR/SOV, Department of State

1 - Dr. James George
Acting Director, Arms Control and Disarmament Agency
Room 5930, New Annex, Department of State

1 - Mr. Hugh Montgomery
Director/INR
Room 6531 NS, Department of State

1 - Mr. Mark Palmer
Deputy Assistant Secretary for
European Affairs
Room 6219 NS, Department of State (EUR)

1 - Mr. Thomas Simons
Director, Office of Soviet Union Affairs
Room 4217, Department of State

1 - Mr. Abram Shulsky
Chief, DOD START Task Force
Pentagon

1 - Mr. Douglas Garthoff
OASD/ISP/EUR-NATO
Room 4D800 Pentagon

1 - Lt. General Paul F. Gorman
Assistant to the Chairman JCS
Room 2E864, Department of Defense, Pentagon

1 - Mr. Donald Gregg
NSC Staff Member/Intelligence
Room 381, EOB

1 - Mr. Carnes Lord
NSC Staff
Room 373, EOB

1 - Dr. Andrew W. Marshall
Director, Net Assessments, OSD
Department of Defense
Room 3A930, Pentagon

1 - Major General William Odom
HODA (DAMI-ZA)
Room 2E464, Pentagon

1 - The Honorable Richard Perle
Assistant Secretary of Defense
(International Security Policy)
Room 4E838, Pentagon

1 - General John W. Vessey, Jr.
Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff
Room 2E873, Department of Defense, Pentagon

1 - The Honorable Francis J. West
Assistant Secretary
International Security Affairs
Room 4E806, Department of Defense, Pentagon

1 - Admiral Daniel J. Murphy (USN Ret.)
Assistant to the Vice President
for National Security Affairs
Room 381, EOB

1 - Paul Wolfowitz
Assistant Secretary of State
East Asian Affairs

1 - Paul Nitze
Delegation Head, INF Talks
Geneva